

Chapter 5

5 Supporting Information

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5.3 Supplement #1 – Public Comments to 2007 Update Addendum

The following letter was received from the Idaho Conservation League during the public comment period for the 2007 Update Addendum. The committee felt that these were very well thought out and helpful comments; however, each item had been thoroughly addressed in the original Idaho County WUI Wildfire Mitigation Plan (2005). Although these comments were discussed at the committee level, there were no actual changes to the 2007 Addendum.

RE: Idaho Conservation League Comments Regarding the Idaho County Wildland Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan—2007 Draft Update

Thank you for considering our comments on the 2007 update of the Idaho County Wildfire Mitigation Plan. For thirty years, the Idaho Conservation League has worked to protect Idaho's clean water, wilderness, and quality of life through citizen action, public education, and professional advocacy. For more information or to become a member, visit www.wildidaho.org. As Idaho's largest state-based conservation organization we represent over 9,000 members, many of whom have a deep personal interest in protecting communities from wildfire and safeguarding firefighter's lives.

We recognize the need to protect homes and communities along the wildland-urban interface and applaud the efforts of those groups and individuals that participated in the development of this plan to make communities in Idaho County less vulnerable to impacts from wildland fire. We believe a successful wildfire mitigation plan should strategically focus the resources available along the wildland-urban interface. In short, we do not know where the fires are going to start but we do know where the homes are. We have attached a few additional comments in regards to the Idaho County 2007 Plan update and to wildfire mitigation plans in general.

Once again we thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the 2007 update of the Idaho County Wildfire Mitigation Plan. Please send us any subsequent documents for this project. We look forward to continuing to work with Idaho County on this project and others in the future.

Sincerely,

John Robison
Public Lands Director

Due to limited resources, it is important for a wildfire mitigation plan to prioritize fire prevention efforts using the best available science in designating WUI areas and in assessing wildfire risk. The plan should also address the consequences of continued residential expansion into fire-prone landscapes. In short, we do not know where the fires are going to start but we do know where the homes are.

Prioritization of Fire Mitigation Efforts

The prioritization of fire prevention and mitigation efforts involves the strategic placement of projects within WUI areas to ensure that community resources are used in a cost-effective and wise manner. This involves focusing on those WUI areas where the risk to people and property is highest. It's important to note that, as the 2007 update states, WUI designation does not equate to a treatment area and that each location targeted for treatment must be evaluated on its own merits.

This is particularly true on public lands where fire and fuel restoration projects may be highly controversial, especially when they include high levels of commercial timber harvest. Oftentimes, such projects are located in previously unmanaged backcountry areas outside of WUI areas, where the relative threat to local communities is low. Although these projects may

sometimes technically be located within the wildland-urban interface (or intermix), the county plan should prioritize areas near high-risk.

Therefore, the 2007 Plan update and other wildfire mitigation plans need to prioritizing fuel reduction projects are focused in areas where they are needed most.

WUI Designation and Risk Assessment

Essential to the prioritization of fire prevention and mitigation projects is using the best available science to designate WUI areas and to assess wildfire risk. Such designations and assessments are the foundation upon which fire mitigation projects are developed, and a faulty foundation can compromise the effectiveness and validity of an entire project. Therefore in order to ensure that community resources are used in a cost-effective and wise manner, high-quality data and sound methods should be used to develop and prioritize projects. This includes accurate mapping of structures, using site-specific information like weather, terrain, and fuels to build fire behavior models, examining historical fire regimes and current ecological conditions, as well as anticipating future forest ecosystem change.

Although the 2007 Plan update includes an updated Wildland-Urban Interface map, we are disappointed that it doesn't include updated wildfire risk assessments. We understand it's a lengthy and time-consuming process, but as the update mentions, ecological, forest health conditions and new development infrastructure (houses, roads, and powerlines) can change rapidly, affecting wildfire risk. Therefore in order to effectively manage fire prevention resources and to prioritize projects, not only are accurate, up-to-date WUI maps required, but also accurate and current wildfire risk information.

Residential Expansion into Fire-Prone Landscapes

Fire is a historic and natural component of the western landscape, and as more homes and cabins are constructed throughout rural Idaho County, communities will have to deal with wildfire risk along the increasing wildland-urban interface. As such, these communities need to carefully consider and understand the consequences of continued residential expansion into fire-prone landscapes, specifically the huge burden on financial and other community resources in the event of a fire control effort. A proactive wildfire mitigation plan focusing on responsible growth and development can anticipate and alleviate these burdens. This approach is the most cost and resource effective way to minimize wildfire risk, as it focuses directly on the formation of new WUI areas.

We commend the incorporation of youth and adult wildfire educational programs into the 2007 Plan update, as it educates the public about the risk associated with wildland-urban interfaces. But we would also like to stress the importance of including projects focused on growth management planning and on open space conservation. Many people choose to live in Idaho County because of its rural qualities, and responsible growth and development will not only anticipate and alleviate the risks associated with the formation of WUI areas, but will also help preserve the quality of life and the unique natural resources of Idaho County.

Transportation Corridors

In order to decrease the risks to firefighters, the County Plan should also prioritize projects where there are multiple transportation routes for emergency crews and turn arounds large enough for fire engines. The County Plan should state that areas with no such prior preparation may pose a safety risk to firefighters and should not be prioritized.

Property evaluation

The County Plan should prioritize projects where homeowners have already taken significant steps toward reducing fuels on private property. During a wildfire, homes that have adopted

Firewise techniques stand a significantly higher chance of surviving a wildfire compared to unprepared homes. Prioritizing projects around these homes will further increase the chance of avoiding losses during a wildfire and serve as an incentive for other property owners to take similar steps.

The County Plan should take into account whether private properties are risk are homes, unoccupied structures, or other forms of property such as patented mining claims with no structures.

5.4 Signature Pages

5.4.1 Representatives of Idaho County Government

Resolution of the Commissioners of Idaho County, Idaho

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A resolution of the Idaho County Board of Commissioners declaring county support and adoption of the Idaho County Wildland Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan 2007 Update Addendum.

Whereas, The Idaho County Board of Commissioners supports the Idaho County Wildland Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan 2007 Update Addendum and

Whereas, The Idaho County Wildland Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan 2007 Update Addendum will be utilized as a guide for planning as related to the National Fire Plan, the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, and other purposes as deemed appropriate.

Therefore be it resolved, that the Idaho County Board of Commissioners do hereby adopt, support, and will facilitate the Idaho County Wildland Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan 2007 Update Addendum's implementation.

Passed and approved this 13th Day of August 2007

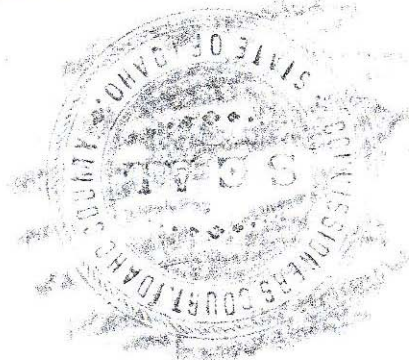
Board of County Commissioners
Idaho County, Idaho

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Board of County Commissioners

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Board of County Commissioners

R. Shyne B.
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Attested by:
, Clerk



5.5 Literature Cited

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